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Social Sciences SERMON PREACHED ON THE OCCASION OF

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TEXTS.

Deuteronomy, xxxiii. 29. "Happy art thou O Israel ; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, thy shield and thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Nehemiah, ii. 5. And I said unto the King, If it please thee, King, and if thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my Fathers' sepulchres that I may build it."

SOCIETY OBJECTS.

The St. Andrew's Society, to which I have been asked to preach to-day, is a society composed of Scotchmen and the descendants of Scotchmen and is entered into for the purpose of keeping alive the national sentiment in the minds of its members ; for the purpose, also, as I understand, affording a pleasant rallying point for brother Scots ; and lastly and mainly—at least as its most useful object—for the purpose of holding out a hand of brotherly sympathy and help to fellow countrymen in the day of their distress. And if it would in any effective way accomplish this last mentioned object, no one would doubt the usefulness of its mission. For it is a fact well known to everyone the least acquainted with the feelings of his fellow men, that in the day when misfortune has overtaken us, and when we have fallen into a condition of want—are without means and without friends—we most naturally turn to our own kindred and those of our own country for help, and any help that is given by them is more acceptable and more agreeable to our feeling than any that could be rendered by strangers, not so well able to understand our feelings or appreciate our difficulties.

OUR PATRON SAINT.

Why is it, that Scotchmen regard Andrew, the brother of Peter, as our patron saint, I am not able to say. Indeed, why they need the patronage of a saint, ancient or modern, I am not able to say. No doubt if we had time to make the inquiry, we could easily discover the reason that these national societies call themselves by the name of a saint. The inquiry would carry us back to a somewhat remote period in our history, to a time when those who are called saints received considerably more attention than they do among us now—and when the patronage of a so-called saint was much more sought after, and much more thought of than it is now. However that may be the Saint, Andrew, by whose name our society is called, was one whose example and character we might well imitate a good deal more than we do. One whose name and history is worthy of being studied and admired, however little meaning we attach now to the idea of his patronage.

CHAPLAINS.

It is a noticeable feature of this as well as of some other national societies, that they do not consider their organization complete without having a chaplain—a tribute,

whether more or less intended, to the importance of the religious element in our life as individuals or as nations ; and it is commonly regarded as one of the privileges or duties of the chaplain to preach a sermon occasionally, as we are now doing to the Society. Whether it is that the Society desires in this way to recognize the importance of religion, or recognize the prominence that religious teaching has had in our national history in its better days, or whether it is from a liking which the Society has to hear the Gospel preached, I will not venture to inquire : it is at all events a good feature in the character of the society, and the having of a chaplain and the hearing of a sermon as a society is certainly in entire harmony with our training and tradition as a people.

I have chosen these passages of Scripture taken as our text, because they suggest lessons not only profitable for us to reflect on at any time, but appropriate to the present occasion.

The modern spirit—with which there is no use quarrelling—unlike the spirit by which our Fathers were possessed seems to think that a sermon is good in proportion to the shortness of it, and limits our sermons to 30 or 40 minutes, rendering anything like a full exposition of our text impossible. There are, however, two points suggested, which I would briefly bring under your notice, namely, First,

NOBLE NATIONAL ELEMENTS.

1. The duty of holding in remembrance, and endeavoring to perpetuate, the noble elements in a nation's life and the famous events and characters in the nation's history.

I think we find in scripture very ample ground for this position—a position no less sustained by reason itself. We find for example in Scripture that very great care was taken in writing down the more striking events in the history of God's ancient people Israel. This was done for other ends than merely to satisfy the national pride. It was done for the instruction of that nation, and of other nations, in all future ages. But while this was one main end, it was done also for the instruction of each successive generation of Israelites, as we find stated in the simple and once familiar Psalm :

“ His testimony and His law in Israel He did place,
And charged our fathers it to show to their succeeding race ;
That so the race which was to come
Might well them learn and know,
And sons unborn, who should arise,
Might to their sons them show.”

It was intended that the account of God's mighty works done on their behalf, and the manner in which these works were recognized, or not recognized by them, should be placed on record, should be kept before the minds of the people, in order that they might remember their high calling as a nation, and that they might be stimulated to walk worthily of it. Hence all along the progress of this people we read not only of the great events which marked their course. We have not only, as it were, the footprints of their covenant God pointed out to us, but also mention made of the noble men and women, whose lives were signalized by devotion to God, and devotion to their country. It is true we have in these writings recounted also, the baser as well as the nobler elements in the national history. Because this history is a true record. There is no exaggeration of the national virtues in it. There is no boasting or glorying in mere earthly resources. *There* are their noble deeds, *there* are their heroisms, their sufferings, their sublime faith in God, their religious fidelity, their loyalty to the interests of their church and nation ; but *there*, also, are their infidelities, their idolatries, their wicked rebellions, their national unrighteousness and their captivities. For there we see God in human history. We see a history in which the law of God is recognized as the final authority. We see a history in which it is demonstrated to all ages that it is not merely human legislation, not merely the regulation of trade, not merely a wide

commerce, or profitable manufactories, or manhood suffrage, or the ballot box, or education in arithmetic, or standing armies, or perfect freedom to cheat our fellow men, or unestablished or disestablished religion; but individual righteousness that exalteth a nation. And this is written to awaken in them and in us the desire to love righteousness and hate iniquity, to show them and us wherein true national glory exists.

Such being the teaching of Scripture, we may feel justified in making use of any reasonable means, such as our schools, our literature, our national societies, to keep alive the remembrance of all that was worthy and memorable in our national life; that the noble deeds by which it has been rendered famous, which have inspired its poets and been an example to all ages, may be imitated by succeeding generations.

Turning then to the history of our people, while we do not claim as Scotchmen to be in any respect superior to the other races that are united in the British nation we do find some national features worthy of being perpetuated, and on these let us reflect for a little.

NATIONAL FEATURES.

There is perhaps no nation of which we have any account, that has not had its heroic period; a period in which the national virtues shone forth with more than ordinary splendour; a period in which there was a struggle for national existence, and in which the nation had opportunity to vindicate its claims for freedom and independence. And the Scottish nation has had such a period in her history; and though small in respect to territory and population, compared with other lands, has occupied a high and honorable place in the annals of the world for the brave stand she has made for her liberty. Her sons can point with just and patriotic pride to many heroisms in her history, and above all the vices of her people, and all the darker features of her national life, there stand forth events and periods worthy to be recorded, and worthy to be remembered as conferring honor on our country.

It would be out of place here to dwell on the political aspects of our country's history; on the noble efforts put forth in earlier periods on behalf of civil liberty; on the protracted and bloody conflicts in which the nation was engaged, and through which, by her unconquerable valour, the priceless boon of liberty was wrung from the grasp of tyranny. These also are memorable and worthy of the poet's song. Nor would it be in place here to recount our national glories in the fields of literature, science and art, or to speak of the prominent part our countrymen had taken in the wars of the British nation, or in extending her commerce, or in governing her colonies, or, in short, in all the highest kind of work men find to do. I would rather confine our attention to elements more in harmony with the present occasion and which lie at the foundation of any renown we justly claim as a people.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

And our nation has from the time of Reformation been conspicuous for this, that it has exalted religion to its rightful place as the source of natural prosperity. That brave and noble spirit, John Knox, who fills so large a place in the early struggles of our national life, while fighting valiantly for liberty of conscience, recognized and taught—what the nations are so slow to learn—that it is by the truth, and by the truth alone, any people can be made free. He inspired the nation with this principle, and he toiled throughout his noble and laborious career to stamp this truth deeply on the heart and conscience of the people. The truth shall make you free. Therefore let the truth be proclaimed. Let it be preached and taught in every corner of the land. Whatever vested rights of Church or State may suffer, whatever established customs may be overthrown, whatever noise and revolution it may cause among the slumbering abuses that have existed so long, whatever opposition it may awaken, let the truth be the heritage and possession of every citizen, from the highest to the lowest, and on *that* let the nation

build. And so the people decreed. And on through a long line of noble successors, in the face of every kind of opposition, in the face of every kind of persecution, in the face of treachery among the people, in the face of kingly threats and kingly tyranny, the good work was carried on, and in every corner of the land these worthy sons of the people and successors of the heroes of earlier days labored to preach the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, to teach men to read for themselves the book of God, to think for themselves, to claim and exercise those God-given rights of conscience which tyranny, both civil and ecclesiastical, would seek to deprive men of. Popery had said, let the book of God be shut, and darkness brood over the nation. The awakened people said, let the book of God be open to every soul within the realm, and opened it was, and open let it still remain.

Such was the spirit of these early advocates of liberty and righteousness. And we may say fairly enough, though there have been times of declension on the part of those to whom the people looked for guidance, that our country has not yet departed from that upward path on which she then entered under the teaching of these early reformers. In every succeeding age men have been raised up by God able to teach the people knowledge—men who loved the truth, men who could write it and speak it with eloquence and power; men, also, who were ready to die for it when occasion called for such a sacrifice.

WORTHY NAMES.

The latest page of our history is by no means wanting in the names of men worthy of Scotland's brightest days; men whom the world is willing to listen to, and does still listen to with admiration. The names of Chalmers, of Guthrie and McLeod, and Cairns (still at his post,) are but a few names out of many worthy of any period in our national history. And were we to go outside of the church, we would find names still higher on the roll of fame, showing that in every walk of life, the sons of old Scotland are still able to stand in the front ranks with the greatest and best of any nation. Nor has Scotland been content to enjoy her privileges alone. In every corner of the world her zeal for the truth has been felt. On the roll of the Church's missionaries alongside the foremost of any age, stand the renowned names of Wilson, of Duff, of Livingstone; this noble missionary, dying on his knees, by his bedside, in the heart of the jungles of Central Africa, the last and noblest of her martyrs to religion and liberty. Nor is there a country in the world where Scotchmen are not to be found, and among them men true to the traditions of their country. Foremost in every enterprise, benevolent or scientific, fighting on the side of liberty and truth, teachers of every useful art and science, centres of influence, missionaries of the Cross, pillars of the church, and loyal upholders of the laws and governments under which they live.)

Paul said, when challenged as to the place of his birth: "I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city," and we may legitimately count it an honor to belong to such a people, to have inherited such a name, to have enjoyed such teachers, to have imbibed such principles. The remembrance of this should rouse us to emulate the deeds of our noble fellow countrymen, and seek to lead a life that will not do discredit to so worthy a name. But time forbids dwelling further on this point.

I would have liked, in the *second* place, to have pointed out as a prominent feature of our history, that our nation has always pleaded for and insisted on the education of the people; the education of the poor as well as the rich; the opening of the door of college and university to the sons of the humblest peasant in the land. This has been a very conspicuous glory of our country; to this she owes much of her fame; and let us say this in passing, that this is a subject of supreme importance to us Canadians as a people, that in no way can a nation more profitably expend its money and its genius than in building up the educational institutions of the country. It is a lamentable evidence of our remaining barbarism, of our want of intelligence—not peculiar to us

Canadians however—that the spirit of what is called economy, but falsely so called, is nowhere given so much scope as in cutting down the salaries of teachers, and the expenses of our schools. Spirit of economy! rather spirit of ignorance; spirit most opposed to the interests of the people. You want to reduce taxation; and how? By increasing ignorance, by stinting your children's chiefest friends, by giving as few advantages as you can to your sons and daughters, by rearing a half educated population? That is not economy. That is not the spirit that inspired our ancestors; that is not the spirit that made Scotland great, and enabled the sons of the peasantry to be the companions of kings, and to rule over empires. And in no way perhaps could this Society, and others, do more good than by providing a bursary by which some poor but talented young Scotchman might be sent to college and become the accomplished teacher of future generations.

But in the *third* place. Our people have borne a character for intelligence, for perseverance under difficulty, for patience in pursuing the object they had in view, for economy, for the purity and order of their family life.

Of the former of these elements of character mentioned, I have not time to speak, I would only say, I don't know where we could find a better illustration of these than in the colonial life of Scotland's sons and daughters.

COLONIAL LIFE.

How many banished from home by stress of circumstances, by the influence of wrongs and oppressions that still linger in this age of professed enlightenment, the curse of our country, or to seek an outlet for their energies, and a wider sphere for their children, have come here to Canada and gone into the unbroken forests, and set up their homes in the deep shadow of the woods, and yet in the course of a single generation, by their own strong arm, have built up for themselves comfortable homes, the abodes of independence and plenty, an honor to the country of their adoption. The difficult but peaceful battle with the trees of the forest, with the stern difficulties of pioneer life, are as worthy of the poet's song, as the wider battlefields of history in which the nations boast. In many a settler's hut, in many a humble home, in many a lowly dwelling in the villages and towns of an earlier period, our fathers and mothers lived lives of quiet patient heroism, the memory of which we should not willingly let die. These days gave scope for all possible strength of body or mind, for the exercise of all the highest qualities of human nature. And they of whatever nation, who had the mind and body which grows up amongst a free, intelligent and religious peasantry, *they* conquered in the laborious contest. And in the comfort of their declining years, in the provision made for their families, in the enjoyment of the liberty and peace of this glorious Dominion of Canada, than which there is no finer or freer country in the world, they enjoy an abundant reward.

NATURAL VIRTUES.

But of the virtues I referred to, there is none, it is said, that a Scotchman takes more kindly to than the virtue of economy. In the exercise of this they cannot be surpassed by any nation under heaven; and so long as this virtue is not unduly exercised in reference to the support of religion or education it is not much to be objected to. Rightly to use what we have, whether it be money, or anything else, is a very high attainment. But I wish to speak a moment of another economy. That word, like many another, has fallen from its original and wider meaning. It literally means the management of the house—the law of the house—and I think it is to this feature in our country's life, as much, perhaps, as to any other,—the Christian government and management of the family, that our nation owes much of her moral and spiritual power. Among no people, perhaps has family religion been more encouraged and insisted upon, as an essential feature of the Christian life. It is the proper regulation of family life that is the source of a country's well-being. Irreligious, disordered

homes make an irreligious, rebellious people; while homes governed as so many in Scotland were, with firm authority and in the fear of God, produce a community of virtuous and law-abiding citizens. Our national poet Burns, in his splendid poem "The Cottar's Saturday Night," gives us a beautiful picture of the family life of many of Scotland's peasantry. He touches on the narrower aspect of economy to which I have referred, in lines which perhaps you will think too homely for the pulpit, when he says,

"The mother, wi' her needle and her shears,
Gars auld claes look amaisht as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due."

But of the nobler, higher law of the house, he speaks in the familiar lines:

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big fu' Bible, once his father's pride;
His bonnet, reverently, is laid aside.
His legart haffels, wearing thin and bare;
'Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion wi' judicious care;
And, 'Let us worship God,' he says with solemn air.
They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
The priest-like father reads the sacred page.
From scenes like these auld Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad."

LOVE OF COUNTRY.

But further, and in the second place, I want, in concluding to speak of the duty of taking an interest, individually, in the welfare of our country.

This is the lesson taught us by the incident in the life of Nehemiah, referred to in the text.

Nehemiah was a servant at a foreign Court, far from his native land. And we are told that when certain men came up from Jerusalem, he enquired anxiously from them about his country, and the condition of his people. When he heard the unhappy state they were in, he was greatly distressed. The king saw his distress, and asked him the cause of it. He explained the cause of his sorrow, and made the request mentioned in our text. And the lesson he so teaches is for us all, of whatever nation, *that it is the mark of a patriot and a Christian to concern himself about the welfare of his country and fellow countrymen.*

We are told that some countries develop in their inhabitants a much stronger love for home than others. It is related of the soldiers taken from the mountains and valleys of Switzerland, to fight in a foreign land, that when they heard the strains of their national music they were so overcome with that feeling we call home sickness, that longing for home, that they were rendered unfit for duty. And it would seem that in the hearts of the inhabitants of the British Islands, and not least in the hearts of Scotchmen, this love of country is as strong as among any people we know of.

The beautiful scenery of our native land, more beautiful though not so vast in proportion, than anything this boastful continent contains, seems to impress itself very deeply on the heart, seems to lay hold of the affections with unusual strength. The Scotchman from home, if he has not allowed his nobler feelings to die out, can not let his thoughts go back to his native place without awakening a chord in his memory that fills his heart with a longing for the place of his nativity. When he allows himself in imagination to return to his home, and roam again over the hills, and by the side of the quiet loch, or the burn that flowed through the lonely glen, or by the seashore where in childhood he gathered pebbles or played with the restless waters, or to the

valley that lay beneath the overshadowing mountains fragrant with the blooming heather, or to the rolling meadows, green and beautiful, and over which the well fed flocks and herds were grazing ; or to the ancient village, with its venerable church, where first he was taught to worship the God of his fathers, whose grave yard held the ashes of departed worthies, or to the ruined towers and castles, relics of a darker day round which the ivy clinging seeks to hide the ravages of time, or to the busy, crowded lanes and courts of ancient cities—he cannot, I say, let his thoughts go back over these scenes of beauty, amid which he has spent his youth, without feeling some longings to visit them again, and gaze once more on the features of his native land, from which he has been so long a stranger. A feeling most natural and honorable, feeling deeply experienced by the people of Israel when far from their native country they sang :

By Babel's streams we sat and wept,
When Zion we thought on ;
In midst thereof we hanged our harps
The willow trees upon.

And if it has not been ours to dwell among these scenes, we can enter into the feelings of those who have.

Such also was the feeling of Nehemiah, but he did not rest satisfied in such feelings. He arose, and giving up his post of honor, he dedicated his life to the elevation of his native land and fellow country-men.

So let us, while fond of remembering the land of our fathers, in this the country of our adoption, endeavor to perpetuate those elements in our nation's life, on which we have been reflecting. And not only let us meet to sing the songs of our country, to indulge in festivities, and pleasant memories, not only to boast of the virtues of our ancestors, and the glory of our people, but in our individual lives and as a Society seek to do something that will shed some little ray of honor on the name we bear, and help some forlorn and shipwrecked brother to take heart again, and enter on the battle of life with new energy and hope. To meet and partake of the boasted haggis, and drink to all the memories and all the toasts imagined suitable for such an occasion, *that* has been thought enough sometimes by which to distinguish ourselves as Scotchmen. But a better and a brighter day is dawning, when the manly race that scorned the oppressor's chain, that drove back the proud usurper, that race that has gathered honor on every field of conflict, shall vindicate its manhood in another and nobler war of independence, when it shall refuse to be the slave of degrading customs, when it shall recognize in its boasted whiskies its deadliest enemy, and when in another sense than Burns intended, they shall sing—

By oppression's woes and pains,
By our sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free.

I have thus hastily touched on themes I would with pleasure have dwelt longer upon. I have put before you what seems to me might be a worthy aim for your Society. And now, in bringing these remarks to a close, let us remember we are here this day to worship the God of our fathers, to listen to the lessons of that Gospel which we have been taught from our mother's knee ; and that it is in this glorious Gospel all our hopes are bound up. To belong to one nation or another may be an honor, greater or less ; but higher far, infinitely more important, the honor open to every one of you of being a citizen of the heavenly Zion, a humble and sincere follower of the Lord, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I do not think it is any misuse of our Sabbath morning to devote it to such reflections as those we have indulged in. But I would think it a misuse of our time if we closed these remarks without pointing you to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. The Apostle Paul said that if any man

could boast in his nation and ancestry, from a religious point of view, he was that man. But he counted these privileges of little worth; counted them all but dross compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

And vain indeed is the boast of mere earthly nationality. Let us see to it while we seek to be bound together by the ties of earth, we are also bound together by the higher, stronger ties of a heavenly relation, by a common faith in Jesus Christ, by a common hope of dwelling throughout eternity in our Father's house above. And while walking here as the citizens of a land in which we boast, let us see to it that at all times, whether at home or abroad, our conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ.

I am far from my hame, and I'm weary oftenwhiles,
For the long'd for hame bringing my Father's welcome smiles;
And I'll ne'er be fu' content until my een do see
The gowden gates of heaven and my ain countree.